

# THE INDIAN CHIEFTAIN.

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## INDIANOLA TERRITORY.

### ACTION ON THE BILL TO BE VIGOROUSLY PRESSED.

Senator Berry, Author of the Dawes Commission Bill, Makes a Strong Speech for Territorial Organization and Better Government.

On the motion to refer his bill creating the territory of Indianola out of the five tribes to the committee on Indian affairs Senator Berry said:

More than two years ago I became convinced, as did many members of the committee on Indian affairs, that the time had come when the conditions existing in that section of country could not continue. Acting upon that idea, I introduced a bill providing for a commission, which was afterwards incorporated in its general features in the Indian appropriation bill. Under that enactment the president of the United States appointed three commissioners to treat with those Indians to induce them, if possible, to agree to an allotment of lands, and to a change and modification in regard to their tribal authority and their tribal government. The president appointed on that commission ex-Senator Dawes, of Massachusetts, Major Kidd, of Indiana, and Capt. Mc-Nemon, of Arkansas. These are men of character, intelligence and unquestioned integrity.

They went into that territory, and for almost a year they have labored diligently and continuously. They have held interviews with all the governing authorities of the different tribes, with the

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councils of the different tribes, and with the delegated congress of the several tribes. They have addressed audiences in all parts of the territory from time to time, and have sought in every way not only to inform themselves of the conditions which really exist there, but if possible, to induce the Indians to make some kind of terms by which those conditions could be changed; but those in authority refused to agree to any terms or to consent to any change.

These men were wholly disinterested. There is no reason why they should state anything in their report except the absolute truth. They have reported to the secretary of the interior, and that report is printed.

It is shown by the report that one white man alone in the Choctaw nation, who married an Indian, has under fence now 50,000 acres of land within the Choctaw nation and is thereby converting to his own use this large body of land in which each member of the tribe has an equal interest with every other member of the tribe.

This is the manner in which these tribes are governed in that country, and the manner in which they are carrying out the stipulation that it should be held for each and every Indian, so that each should have an equal part with every other Indian.

Not only do these conditions exist, but by reason of a divided jurisdiction of the courts, by reason of the fact that the Indians have jurisdiction, exclusive and original, in certain matters, and that the United States has jurisdiction where one of the parties to the suit pending may be a white man and the other an Indian, neither party is absolutely responsible for the

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enforcement of the laws, and that has brought a condition of affairs which cannot continue.

The commission say that robberies of railroad trains, robberies of stations and robberies of individuals and express companies are of daily occurrence, and that the Indians are wholly powerless to enforce the law or to prevent the depredations which are going on in that section of the country.

I wish to state here, Mr. President, that I have lived for twenty-five years in a county bordering upon the Cherokee nation. I have none but the kindest feelings towards the Indians of that and all the other territories. I do not desire nor does any man in that part of the country desire, to take from the Indian a sole foot of his land without full, just and ample compensation for all that it is worth. The people there do not propose to take his land, but they do desire that that land shall be allotted to the Indians in severalty, that tribal government shall cease to exist, and that the laws and the government of the United States shall be extended over that territory and operate upon every citizen equally and alike.

In addition to these difficulties which confront us, the commission say that the government of those tribes has fallen into the hands of a few individuals, and that the great body of fullblood Indians are crowded back into the hills and hollows where their children have no school facilities, and instead of becoming more civilized it is admitted that they are less so than they were twenty years ago. I went recently into the Choctaw nation. It is impossible that any man should conceive of the conditions which there exist without

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visiting that territory. I want to say that the large majority of the people in the territory, both whites and Indians, are peaceable and law abiding and desire the enforcement of the law. Towns have been erected there of four or five thousand inhabitants, and magnificent buildings, splendid structures have been erected at a number of points. South McAlester, Tahlequah, Vinita, Muskogee, Ardmore and other points in the territory have grown to be considerable cities. It is impossible to-day that the United States should remove from that territory those 250,000 white people. It is impossible that all the improvements which have been made there can be swept from the face of the earth, those Indians isolated, and the original idea carried out that they should live alone. It is not desirable, Mr. President, even if it could be done.

The time has come when the United States should take this matter in hand and deal with it in such a way as to do justice as nearly to every citizen in that territory as it is possible to do.

I do not pretend that this matter can be settled without great difficulty, or probably working injustice in individual cases, and every day that the existing conditions continue it will become more difficult to do justice between all the inhabitants of that territory. I believe that the larger number of the Indians themselves realize and recognize the fact that the time has come when these conditions should be changed.

I wish to repeat what I said before, that it is not the purpose of the people of that country to de-

(Concluded on page 4.)

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